

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions do raise a first Amendment issue. Does the 'freedom of speech' guarantee 'freedom of propaganda' over the FCC-regulated airways. What would be the FCC's reaction if a blatantly neo-Nazi or blatantly anti-semitic or anti-black program were broadcast? Whatever that reaction would be, the same reaction should apply to Sinclair. If the FCC would permit the former then Sinclair has free reign. If the FCC would restrict such material then it should be ethically bound to restrict Sinclair's ultra-conservative propaganda.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.